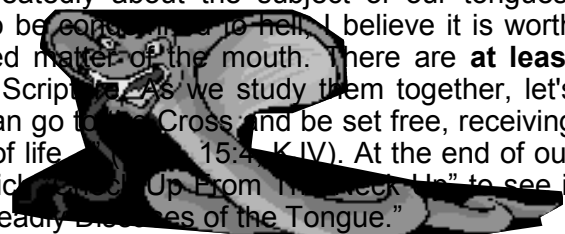


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Seven Deadly Diseases of the Tongue

The Bible has much to say concerning the power of our own words. Jesus said, "I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." (Mt. 12:36-37, RSV). Proverbs echoes this by saying, "**Death and life are in the power of the tongue...**" (Prov. 18:21, RSV). James devotes an entire chapter on the subject, including this stark illustration: "The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell." (Jas. 3:6, NIV). These are strong words! If the Bible speaks repeatedly about the subject of our tongues, including the possibility of its misuse causing us to be consigned to hell, I believe it is worth our time to delve deeper into this often overlooked matter of the mouth. There are **at least** seven deadly diseases of the tongue identified in Scripture. As we study them together, let's remain open to the Holy Spirit's conviction so we can go to the Cross and be set free, receiving from the Lord, "a wholesome tongue that is a tree of life" (Prov. 15:4, KJV). At the end of our study, we will have an opportunity to perform a quick "Up From The Neck Up" to see if we need healing from one or more of "The Seven Deadly Diseases of the Tongue."



No 1 - MURMURING AND COMPLAINING

"And all the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron" (Num. 14:2, KJV). This is the story of the twelve spies God sent to search out the promised land of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey (Num. 13:27). These spies returned after 40 days "...with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them; they brought also some pomegranates and figs" (Num. 13:23, RSV). Two of these spies, Joshua and Caleb, gave a good report, saying, "We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it" (vs. 30, NIV). The other ten spies gave an evil report, saying, "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are" (vs. 31, NIV). Scripture says these ten spies brought an evil report (vs. 32), that spread through the congregation of the Israelites, causing them to murmur against Moses and Aaron (Num. 14:2). **"And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, 'If only we had died in the**

land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness!”(Num. 14:2, NKJV). This murmuring from the host of the Israelites reached God's ears in Heaven. God responded, “How long will this wicked community grumble against me? **I have heard the complaints of these grumbling Israelites**” (Num. 14:27, NIV). Remember what Jesus said, “By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned” (Mt. 12:37, RSV)? Remember the words from Proverbs, “Death and life are in the power of tongue” (Prov. 18:21, RSV)? Listen to what God said in reply to the murmuring that had reached his ears, “So tell them, ‘As surely as I live, declares the LORD, **I will do to you the very things I heard you say**: In this desert your bodies will fall—every one of you twenty years old or more who was counted in the census and who has grumbled against me. Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home, except Caleb son of Jephunneh and Joshua son of Nun” (vs. 28-30, NIV).

Their murmuring and complaining words caused their own destruction. Scripture records that everyone of the murmuring Israelites over age twenty died in the wilderness and never entered the land God Himself had promised to give them (Heb. 3:12). But, Joshua and Caleb, who gave the good report, were free from the life-threatening disease of murmuring and received God's promise. “Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb...because he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel” (Josh. 14:14, KJV). “...Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same.” (Josh. 11:16-17, KJV).

Disease number one, murmuring (or complaining), can prove fatal to the whole body if not dealt with. “The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.” (Jas. 3:6, NIV). Now, realizing the seriousness of this first disease of the tongue, let's take a look at the other six and then head towards the “check-up center” for diagnosis and healing.

No 2 - GOSSIP

“Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer [gossip] among thy people” (Lev. 19:16, KJV). “The words of a gossip are like tasty bits of food. People like to gobble them up” (Prov. 18:8, NCV). “For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by fair and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the simple-minded” (Rom. 16:18, RSV). The Apostle Paul speaks of such people, saying, “Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and **avoid them**” (Rom. 16:17, KJV). A tongue diseased with gossip brings wounds to others. It hurts people. But, “a wholesome tongue is a tree of life...” (Prov. 15:4, KJV). “He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he that repeateth a matter [by gossip] separates friends” (Prov. 17:9, KJV). When Jesus met the woman at the well, He told her she'd had five husbands, and the man she was with was not her husband (Jn. 4:18). He addressed her sin and led her to the path of forgiveness. Notice that nowhere in Scripture do we see Jesus telling others of this woman's sin. Instead, she was set free and brought others, by her own testimony, to Jesus for salvation (Jn. 4:39). A tongue that is diseased with gossip, not only separates friends, but also brings deep wounds to others. Paul admonishes us to **mark such people and avoid them**. Do not even listen to their gossip! This includes buying the “gossip rags” that are so popular at the checkout counter of the grocery stores. “Mark them...and avoid them!” (Rom. 16:17, KJV).

No 3 - EXCESSIVE TALKING

“If you talk a lot, you are sure to sin; if you are wise, you will keep quiet ” (Prov. 10:19, NCV). Abraham Lincoln said, “Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak out and remove all doubt.” This has been true for me on more than one occasion. King Solomon

was one of the wisest men in all of history. He wrote in Ecclesiastes about the disease of excessive talking. "Think before you speak, and be careful what you say to God. God is in heaven, and you are on earth, so **say only a few words** to God. The saying is true: Bad dreams come from much worrying, and **too many words come from foolish people**" (Eccl. 5:2-3, NCV). An old commercial used to say, "When E.F. Hutton speaks, people listen." Why was that? E.F. Hutton had a reputation for not speaking unless he had something genuinely life changing to say. He thought before he spoke, and therefore people were willing to listen. E.F. Hutton, later, began speaking before he had studied the matter, and went bankrupt. His motto was correct, and based on Bible principles, but his tongue became diseased and it was fatal to his business. "A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards" (Prov. 29:11, KJV). "**He [Herod] asked Jesus question after question, but there was no reply**" (Lk. 23:9, LVB). Herod spoke many words, like a fool, but Jesus spoke few words, and was resurrected three days later. You do the math.

No 4 - IDLE OR CARELESS WORDS

"**And I tell you this, that you must give account on Judgment Day for every idle word you speak**" (Mt. 12:37, LVB). Careless or idle words flow out of our mouths every day. Jesus says that we will have to give an account for each and everyone of them. Or, we can repent today, get delivered from this affliction of our tongue, and be free. "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (Jn. 8:36, NIV). "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' anything beyond this comes from the evil one" (Mt. 5:37, NIV). Enough said?



No 5 - FLATTERY

"**Those who give false praise [flattery] to their neighbors are setting a trap for them**" (Prov. 29:5, NCV). The flattering tongue is an infectious disease. It infects the flatterer with manipulation and the one being flattered with false assurance and pride. We must remember there is a difference between flattery and compliments. Complimenting is good because it is based on truth. Jesus complimented many people on their faith, but he never flattered. Flattery is based beyond the truth, is filled with deceit, and often comes with a hidden motive to manipulate or gain something from the one being flattered. "The Lord will stop those flattering lips and cut off those bragging tongues" (Ps. 12:3, NCV). **The flatterer is cousin to the accuser.** If the flatterer can't get what he or she wants through the deceitfulness of flattery, they will resort to accusation as an alternative. The devil is known to be both the flatterer (Dan. 11:32) and the accuser (Rev. 12:10). God is referred to as neither. Who is your tongue yielded to?

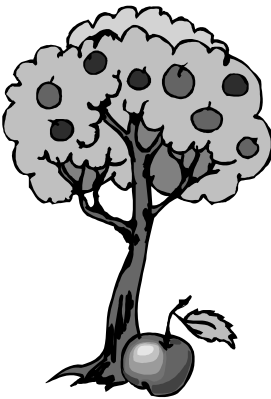
No 6 - HASTINESS IN SPEECH

"**Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him**" (Prov. 29:20, RSV). "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him" (Prov. 18:13, NKJV). **Hasty speech disease** can trap us quicker than almost anything else can. "You are snared by the words of your mouth..." (Prov. 6:2, NKJV). How many times have we agreed to do something before praying about it? People have changed careers and moved their entire family because of hastiness in speech. Many men and women are in prison today because they spoke hastily and agreed to take a package across town for a friend. "You are snared by the words of your mouth..." (Prov. 6:2, NKJV). Never be too quick to answer a matter, but rather seek the Lord for wisdom. "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver" (Prov. 25:11, KJV). "He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life; but he that openeth wide

his lips shall have destruction" (Prov. 13: 3, KJV). "Death and life are in the power of the tongue" (Prov. 18:21, RSV). "Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (Jas. 1:19, RSV).

No 7 - LYING

"**The LORD detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful**" (Prov. 12:22, NIV). "...and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21:8, KJV). For outside the city of God are "...sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and **whosoever loveth and maketh a lie**" (Rev. 22:15, KJV). "But it's just a little white lie," we sometimes say. God says it is a "fatal disease of the tongue." If not confronted and dealt with, it can bring destruction. Pretty harsh words. Jesus, dealing with this issue with the religious folks of his day, said, "You belong to your father the devil, and you want to do what he wants. He was a murderer from the beginning and was against the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie, he shows what he is really like, because he is a liar and the father of lies" (Jn. 8:44, NCV). If we have perpetual lying tongue disease, it is a pretty good indicator of who our spiritual father is, because we know that it is God "...that cannot lie..." (Titus 1:2, KJV). "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Mt. 12:34, RSV). We may need healing, not only of the common disease of lying, but we may also require a spiritual heart transplant. Let's find out how.



A CHECK UP FROM THE NECK UP



We have seen the serious ramifications of a diseased tongue. Now let's perform a quick **check-up from the neck up** and get some healing. Have you found yourself **murmuring and complaining** lately? Think about your words at work, home and even at Church for a moment. Have you spoken against your boss, wife, or Pastor? Have you been caught up in lying to get out of a situation? Possibly a situation your **hasty words** got you into? Or, maybe you've become a **flatterer** to get something you want. The Bible indicates that this type of talking will not only keep us in the same situation, but we may end up dying in it, never receiving the promises of God. Repent and begin to confess God's promises over the situation instead of murmuring about the circumstances. **It begins with a change of heart.** Jesus told us that if we have tongue and mouth disease showing itself above the neck, it is because we have spiritual heart disease below the neck. "**For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks**" (Mt. 12:34, RSV). In effect, our tongue is the **spiritual barometer** God has given us to read the condition of our hearts. Our spiritual barometer is so accurate!

Jesus said it this way, "**A tree is known by its fruit...for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks**" (Mt. 12: 33-34, RSV). If the tree is producing apples, we don't call it a weeping willow tree. We know by the tree's fruit that it is an apple tree. And we don't call a weeping willow a pear tree. Why? Because, for it to be a pear tree it would have to have evidence of pears on its branches. "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? **Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A**

good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit...**wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them**" (Mt. 7:16-18, 20). In other words, the root type produces the fruit type. "Bad root, bad fruit; good root, good fruit." Said another way, a disease of the tongue is really rooted in a disease of the heart. "**For from within, out of the heart, proceed evil thoughts**, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **All these come from within, and defile the man**" (Mk. 7: 21-23, KJV). If we want to receive healing from tongue and mouth disease, it begins with the healing of our heart.

THREE STEPS TO HEALING

STEP ONE: Call your problem by its right name: Sin. Be honest. Jesus said, "...by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Mt. 12:37, RSV). We must come to a place where we acknowledge that our problem is not caused by someone else, our circumstances, or a hot-tempered ethnic bloodline of some type. People use these and many other excuses for tongue and mouth disease. If it isn't in our heart to begin with, Jesus said it can't come out of our mouth. A brief story brings this point home. A man was asked the question, "If you squeeze an orange, what do you get out of it?" He quickly replied, "Orange juice, of course." The questioner responded, "Not necessarily. You get out of the orange what is in it. If it has a worm, or has become rotten or soured, and you squeeze it, that's what you get." True statement. When we are squeezed by life's circumstances, our family, our work, or our other relationships, whatever pops out of us is what was already in us to begin with. We shouldn't be angry with others when this happens. Instead, we should thank God that they revealed the diseased condition of our hearts. Now, we must take our heart to God for healing.

STEP TWO: Confess your sin and receive cleansing and a new heart. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" (Ez. 36:26, KJV). "For if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from **all** unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9, KJV). Let's pray together:

"Father, I acknowledge today that I need healing from my tongue and mouth disease. I also acknowledge that the root of my problem is in my heart. It's not anyone else's fault that I act the way I do. I alone am responsible for the horrible things that come out of my mouth. It's me, Lord. I ask you to give me a new heart and cleanse me completely right now with the all-forgiving blood of your Son, Jesus Christ. Holy Spirit, please place a guard over my mouth and a double watch over my tongue so I don't sin this way in the future. I ask and thank you, Father in Heaven, and receive by faith right now, in Jesus' Name. Amen.

FINAL STEP: Refuse to sin, yield to God. Be aware, from this moment forward, of the things that come to mind before you speak them. Avoid gossiping people and begin to thank God for the things you do have, instead of complaining to others about the things you don't have. Stay focused on God's promises, confess them over your situation, and praise God in advance for changing things in Jesus' Name.

Congratulations! God has placed within you a new heart and made you into a good tree. Now you will produce good fruit from your mouth. "A wholesome tongue is a tree of life..." (Prov. 15:4, KJV), and Jesus is living his life through you!

